Let Kids Help With Christmas Gift Wrap Cleanup

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Body

Dear Heloise: With four boys, there was a huge mess on Christmas morning when they opened their gifts. One year, I decided to do something different. I got four trash bags, gave each boy a bag and told them they couldn't open another gift until they put the ribbons and wrapping paper from the previous gift into the bag. It saved me at least an hour of cleaning and reorganizing. After we opened all our presents, I told them to put away their clothes and toys.

They're grown men now, with their own families, and they follow what we did when they were children. Their wives appreciate it! - Imogene in Wisconsin

CONQUER KITCHEN CLUTTER

Dear Heloise: Over the past 30 years, I've lived in eight different houses. Some had big kitchens and some had small ones, but no matter the size, I found that the fewer items on my COUNTER, the cleaner it looked. When visitors dropped in, they often commented on how clean my kitchen looked, but that was due mainly to not having a mixer, condiments, knickknacks and more sitting out. It also made the kitchen look bigger, as well as clean. So, if you want a tidy kitchen, get rid of or hide your clutter. - Geena in Rhode Island PUMPKIN BREAD Dear Heloise: Please reprint your Pumpkin Bread recipe. I want to make some large batches to give out as Christmas gifts to some of my friends. - Ella M., Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

Ella, this is one of my favorite treats and is so easy to make! You'll need: 1 2/3 cups flour 1 1/4 cups sugar 1 teaspoon baking soda 1 teaspoon cinnamon 1/4 teaspoon salt 2 eggs, slightly beaten 1/2 cup chopped pecans 1/2 cup salad oil 1 cup canned pumpkin Sift together dry ingredients. Add nuts and mix well. Set aside. Combine remaining ingredients and add to the dry ingredients. Mix just enough to blend. Pour into a 9-by-5-by-3-inch greased and floured loaf pan. Bake at 350 F for 60-75 minutes.

If you like this recipe, you'll find it in my Heloise's Baking Soda Hints and Recipes pamphlet, filled with cleaning hints using this versatile, inexpensive product. To get a copy, send $5, along with a stamped (70 cents), self-addressed, long envelope, to: Heloise/Baking Soda, P.O. Box 795001, San Antonio, TX 78279-5001. Or you can order it online at www.Heloise.com.If you think the Pumpkin Bread is good, just wait until you try the Carrot Cake recipe, which is also in this six-page pamphlet! - Heloise

EASY POTATO SALAD

Dear Heloise: My family loves potato salad all year long, so I found a way to make it faster than I used to. I cut the potatoes into small cubes, then boil them rather than boiling the whole potato. The cubes take much less time to cook, saving energy. After they finish cooking, I rinse with cold water, mix with the other ingredients, and I have potato salad in 30 minutes! - Taylor K., Lewistown, Pa.

Let Kids Help With Christmas Gift Wrap Cleanup

SUPER SHOPPERS

Dear Heloise: My grandchildren love playing with toy food. I have a child-size play grocery cart in my kitchen, and as I cook throughout the week, I place clean recyclable items in the cart.

I'll clean out plastic peanut butter jars, oatmeal boxes, egg cartons, cake boxes, etc. When the children visit, the cart has new surprise items. After getting lots of play hours from the items, I recycle them. - Theresa V., Hamilton, Ohio

HOLIDAY LONELINESS

Dear Readers: This time of year is busy and bustling for many - parties, plans, packages and performances. But for others, there's immense loneliness: no hugs, hand-holding or happiness.

A study from Harvard University states that loneliness affects 25% to 60% of senior citizens and puts millions of Americans at risk of damaging their health! Loneliness can be as bad for folks as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, the study claims, and it can shorten your life by up to eight years.

The factors that can lead to isolation and loneliness? Being homebound, loss of mobility, no transportation, death of a spouse and even hearing loss, among others.

What are some solutions? Sharing a meal, taking a walk with a senior once a week or a phone call. AARP has put together a choir program in some areas that gets folks together with their peers to sing! For more information, check out www.Connect2Affect.org.

We have the ability to brighten up the holidays for a lonely senior. Let's do it! - Heloise A GREAT IDEA Dear Heloise: An effective way to clean sink disposals is to put a cone-shaped toilet bowl brush into the opening and fit it under the rubber splash. A twirl of the brush will loosen the foul-smelling deposits and leave the disposal clean. - Pat J. in San Antonio

TINY T-SHIRT HOLES

Dear Heloise: Is it me, or do others have this problem: My T-shirt tops made of cotton and cotton blended with spandex have small tears/holes in the front where my zipper placket and button are.

I'm not overweight, but I must rub against counters, etc., where the zipper hits and causes this. This sometimes happens after only a few washings. Are the fabrics just not made well today? I've heard our clothes are becoming disposable. This is true of these items.

I enjoy your column in The Villages Daily Sun, as well as your mother's for years. - Pam in Florida Pam, since the holes appear in the same area of the T-shirts, they are probably caused by rubbing against a belt, zipper or button. Readers, is anyone else having this problem? - Heloise

CHANGE AGENT

Dear Heloise: I just had a major surgery.

I was glad I'd thought to change my sheets the morning before going to the hospital, as it was a week before I could stand well enough to do it. One less thing to worry about that first week! - Connie T., Creston, Iowa Connie, it's smart to plan ahead. Here's to a speedy recovery! - Heloise

HOLIDAY REMINDERS

Dear Heloise: Just some friendly holiday reminders: Do not burn wrapping paper in your fireplace. It burns rapidly, but it can give off dangerous fumes due to the chemicals used in the manufacturing process.

Keep ribbon away from young children and animals. It's a serious choking hazard that could result in a trip to the emergency room or the vet's office.

Last of all, please do not put real candles on a Christmas tree, and don't leave candles burning when you leave the house.

- A Firefighter in St. Louis.

HOLIDAY SAFETY

Dear Readers: Often during the holidays, we get busy and distracted, and we forget to take cautionary measures while we are out and about. Here are some things to remember: Beware of the person who bumps into you, because it's a favorite method of pickpockets.

Do not announce your plans for travel on social media. Do that AFTER you get home from your trip.

If you think you're being followed home while driving, don't go home. Drive to a police station or a crowded area.

Thieves usually try to target people they feel are vulnerable, such as elderly folks or the handicapped.

Above all, stay alert and be aware of your surroundings.

- Heloise

NEW PHISHING SCAM

Dear Heloise: Please tell your readers to be aware of a new phishing scam going around. Someone contacts you, usually by email or phone call, claiming to be from your bank and wanting to update your information for security purposes, or they'll have to deactivate your account. Hang up immediately! Call your bank directly and ask if they need your information updated, and let them know about the scammer who called you.

Whenever you get a request to update information on ANY financial matters, DO NOT click on the link they provide. Instead, call the company directly and protect all financial information. - Trent D. in New York BAG VS. BOX Dear Heloise: This holiday season, many of us will receive gifts in boxes and bags. I try to take care of the boxes by collapsing them for storage, and the bags are carefully stored away for reuse. The wrapping usually gets tossed out, but even that goes into the recycle bin. Remember, "reuse and recycle" as much as you can. The Earth is our home, so let's keep it clean. - Paula in Alaska

FRESHEN THE DRAPES

Dear Heloise: No time to deep clean before guests come? Take your drapes, curtains and comforters and place them in the dryer (separately) for a few minutes. A short spin on the "air" setting will remove dust, freshen the look and plump up a comforter. - Meg in California.

AUTO TEXT FIX

Dear Readers: Make predictive text work for you on your cellphone. When you're typing a text or email and make a small typo, you shouldn't have to erase what you've typed. Watch the predictive text automatically correct your error. - Heloise

HOT MEDS

Dear Heloise: I've heard that it's not good to store medications in the bathroom. What do you think? - Kathy W. in California Kathy, I agree completely, and here's why: Heat and dampness from the bathroom can render medications less potent and possibly ineffective, especially pills and capsules.

Store medications in a cool, dry place, away from light, moisture and heat, and also away from children. Take the cotton stopper out of the bottle, too.

Ask your pharmacist for more hints on medication storage, and read on for another hint about prescription medications. - Heloise HEALTH INFORMATION Dear Heloise: I recommend talking to your pharmacist about medications. My doctor put me on a new medicine, but when I went to pick it up, the pharmacist said that this drug will interact with the meds I am on. It will cause severe illness.

It seems that my pharmacist might know more about medications than my doctor does. - Deb in Pennsylvania

CHILDREN'S SECTION

Dear Heloise: We like to travel, and we often go to places we don't know a lot about. Books have a wealth of info, but they are usually too lengthy or in-depth for my purposes.

I discovered that the children's section of the library is a great source of books that are brief and to the point. And they have pictures! - Dorothy S., Newport Beach, Calif.

CLEAN SUITCASES

Dear Heloise: When we come home from a trip, we unload suitcases in the garage so I can give them a good wipedown, especially the wheels. You wouldn't believe how black the towel gets. I also unload the dirty clothes right into the laundry room. - An Avid Reader, The Villages, Fla.

JUST A RING AWAY

Dear Heloise: My wife recently suffered a short-term illness. I moved to the spare bedroom so that she might have a good night's rest. I bought a battery-operated doorbell and put the button in her room and the receiver in mine.

In the event that she needed anything during the night, I was only a ring away. - Mr. Bill, via email Here's a Heloise hug. Hope she is better now. - Heloise

A SALTY SUBJECT

Dear Readers: If salt has been thrown on the sidewalks and/or roads, wipe off your pet's feet after a walk. The salt can burn and irritate tender footpads.

- Heloise SPECIAL GIFT

Dear Heloise: Family recipes always make a wonderful gift. We use photo albums with slots to hold the recipe cards. If you don't like a recipe, you can easily remove it and replace it with another. - Fannie T. in New York

ANOTHER TAKE ON CARTS

Dear Heloise: I'm a senior who can only walk a few steps without a walker. When I go to my supermarket, I try to find a space near an empty shopping cart because I can't push a walker and a cart at the same time.

My market, one of a big chain, has employees go out every 10 minutes to collect all the empty carts, so I have hard time finding one.

It would be nice if they left a few in the handicapped area so people like me could grab one. I mentioned this to the manager, and he said it was company policy to bring all the carts inside. - James S., Ontario, Calif.

James, I understand your frustration.

The store may be concerned about shopping carts dinging cars, or any number of things. Speak to the manager again. - Heloise

A PEPPERY RESPONSE

Dear Heloise: My kitten was not trained and was starting to use my throw rug as a litter box. My friend told me that black pepper is a safe and effective deterrent - she was right! - Amy R. in Ohio Amy, a light sprinkle of black pepper is OK; never cayenne or other spices.

- Heloise TIME TO UNWIND

Dear Heloise: Hairs, yarns and threads can get wrapped around a vacuum's rotating brush - so annoying! I use a seam ripper to cut across the brush, and then I pull out the mess. - D.R. in Nevada Send a money-saving or timesaving hint to Heloise, P.O. Box 795001, San Antonio, TX 78279-5001, or you can fax it to 1-210-HELOISE or email it to Heloise@Heloise.com I can't answer your letter personally but will use the best hints received in my column.

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